



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

STATE FURBEARER PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

Spring 2003

Wildlife Division P.O. Box 200701 Helena MT 59620-0701

This newsletter is provided through Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) state furbearer program to inform trappers, hunters, government agencies, the public, and department personnel about current furbearer management activities and issues in the state of Montana – Brian Giddings, State Furbearer Coordinator.

YOUTH LICENSE AGE CHANGE

The state legislature recently passed a bill that will change the age to purchase a general trapper's license from 13 to 12. This FWP sponsored bill is intended to align the age of purchasing any general license in the state at 12 years of age. Now the youth trapper's license is for 6-11 year olds, allows for trapping only mink and muskrat, and will be available free of charge.

The general trapper's license allows anyone 12 years of age or older to harvest the state furbearer species which include beaver, otter, muskrat, mink, bobcat, marten, fisher, and wolverine. A general trapper's license remains at the cost of \$20.

MONTANA YOUTH TRAPPER CAMP

The fourth annual Youth Trapper Camp (YTC) is scheduled for June 6, 7, & 8 at Beaver Creek Park south of Havre. Over 350 students have passed through camp

activities since the first session in 2000. Contact Fran or Jim Buell from the MTA by phone at 376-3178 or over the internet at 7mbuell@ttc-cmc.net by email. Registration is \$40.00 although there are \$20.00 FWP scholarships available. The camp is co-sponsored by the MTA, FWP and 4-H.

FWP COMMISSION MEETS IN JUNE

The FWP Commission will meet in Helena June 12, 2003 with an agenda that includes setting tentative furbearer quotas. This is the second year of the biennial season setting process, so no other regulations changes will be made. However, furbearer quotas are set on an annual basis. Only tentative quotas for bobcat, otter and fisher will be adopted.

Tentative quotas will be available on the FWP website or by calling 444-2612 after June 7. Comments on quotas will be accepted into July. The FWP Commission will adopt final quotas for the 2003-2004 season at an August 7 meeting in Helena.

10-YEAR HARVEST SUMMARY

On the following page is a 10-year harvest summary for furbearer, predator and non-game species monitored by FWP. Each column represents the total statewide harvest reported by trappers for the species listed for each of the last 10 years.

Year	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Beaver	6,478	11,699	8,620	16,531	13,497	11,634	12,753	9,056	11,156	
Otter	51	62	61	65	84	67	64	48	96	83
Muskrat	15,772	14,256	11,727	16,121	18,816	12,243	13,247	13,842	11,070	
Mink	844	1,145	919	1,638	1,493	1,078	1,709	1,536	959	
Marten	822	1,323	802	830	900	716	653	1,064	845	953
Fisher	7	8	2	6	7	8	5	7	7	7
Wolverine	9	9	12	12	15	9	4	13	10	15
Lynx	2	3	5	2	3	6	3	Closed	Closed	Closed
Bobcat	965	1,052	762	1,041	1,206	1,093	1,411	1,398	1,702	1,649
Weasel	327	802	343	1,094	381	246	480	167	100	
Skunk	1,734	3,219	1,784	3,382	2,682	1,567	2,762	1,570	1,330	
Coyote	9,766	10,079	5,495	9,354	10,510	6,059	11,134	9,303	6,238	
Fox	6,047	6,872	3,573	5,764	4,810	2,156	3,629	2,201	2,771	
Raccoon	4,067	4,392	4,687	9,216	6,956	4,200	4,944	4,387	4,034	
Badger	839	931	491	1,819	1,071	261	991	498	631	
TOTAL	47,731	58,854	38,813	66,876	62,434	41,340	53,786	45,090	40,949	

AVERAGE PELT PRICE VALUES

The table below indicates trends in pelt price values. These are price estimates from buyer sources after the end of each season. The market has improved for some species.

<u>Species</u>	<u>2000-01</u>	<u>2001-02</u>	<u>2002-03</u>
Beaver	15.98	12.40	14.00
Otter	59.17	47.93	75.00
Muskrat	1.71	2.07	2.10
Mink	8.37	10.05	10.50
Marten	19.95	18.70	19.50
Fisher	28.62	25.12	25.00
Wolverine	212.94	225.00	225.00
Bobcat	106.05	135.25	203.00
Coyote	18.93	23.70	30.70
Red Fox	16.24	22.65	24.00
Raccoon	10.02	10.30	11.00
Ermine	no buy	2.00	3.00
Skunk	3.73	5.00	7.00
Badger	15.98	18.50	21.50

HARVEST QUOTAS AND LIMITS

Furbearer species harvest quotas are used as a management strategy to maintain a long-term sustainable harvest. Quotas are set so that only a portion of a population is removed each year. For example, bobcat harvest rates should not exceed 10-15%. Trends in population size are monitored by FWP, which may result in quota changes.

Trapper limits are designed to distribute opportunity when demand exceeds supply.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service requests that trappers and hunters report sightings or wolf sign. Please make these reports to your local FWP or Forest Service office or by calling the USFWS at 449-5225. Information provided by trappers and hunters will aid in the management and eventual removal of wolves from the endangered species list.